

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

CENTRAL REGION - PLANNING

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September 21, 2004

Mr. Jeff Currier
Borough Manager
Lake and Peninsula Borough
P.O. Box 495
King Salmon, AK 99613-0495

Subject: Comments on Draft Revision to Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan

Dear Mr. Currier:

Thank you for your letter of August 2, 2004 concerning a revision to the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan. As you are aware, the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan is being revised in response to a recent court order that directed the Department to halt all work on the Iliamna-Nondalton road and bridge project until the economic costs and benefits are considered in the next revision of the Southwest Plan. We are undertaking such a revision, extracting two projects from the previously defined baseline for the Southwest Plan, the Iliamna-Nondalton and the Dillingham-Aleknagik corridor projects, and subjecting them to the evaluation process used to assess other projects in the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan.

The purpose of the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan is to guide the development of a range of transportation options designed to meet the transportation needs (both passenger and freight) of the region, including all modes and their connections, over a period of at least 20 years. One recommendation of the Plan is the development, over time, of a surface transportation link among the communities between Cook Inlet and Bristol Bay. The Plan prioritizes the project segments of this link using the evaluation measures of cost and effectiveness. This prioritization separates the projects into two groups, those likely to be constructed in the next 20-year period and those likely to be constructed later. The actual order of implementation of the projects depends not only on DOT&PF's planning process, as reflected in the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan, but also on the Department's project programming process, as reflected in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program or STIP. The STIP, which is the process by which funds are allocated to projects, has a prioritization process that is separate from, though related to, that in the Plan. Projects included in the STIP must be consistent with the Statewide Transportation Plan, and its regional components, but the STIP is more focused on projects that

are "ready to go" in terms of funding availability, status of the environmental process, public support, etc.

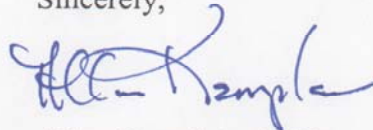
In your letter you recommend that the priority of the Iliamna-Nondalton Road project be placed above that of the Williamsport-Pile Bay project. Based on the evaluation methodology used in the Plan, the Williamsport-Pile Bay project rates more highly. However, since most engineering design and environmental documentation has been completed for the Iliamna-Nondalton Road, it may well be programmed in the STIP for implementation sooner than the Williamsport-Pile Bay Road project.

Your letter also recommends that more elaboration on the need for the Iliamna-Nondalton Road project be included in the Plan. The Executive Summary of the Plan includes recommendations for community linkages that provide the greatest near-term benefit. The description for the Iliamna-Nondalton Road will be expanded to include additional discussion of its benefits. However it should be noted that the focus of the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan is to describe a system of transportation linkages that, over time, will improve the ability of persons and freight to move to, from and within the region. Its purpose is not to document in detail the justification for every project included within it. More detailed project justification will occur as projects move through the STIP and project-level planning and environmental processes.

A final comment in your letter is that the Plan should mention the need for barge landing facilities at the Iliamna Lake communities once the upgrade of the Williamsport-Pile Bay Road is completed. The Intermodal Connections section in the Cook Inlet to Bristol Bay Corridor discussion in the Plan does mention this need.

Thank you again for your input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allen Kemplen".

Allen Kemplen, AICP
Southwest Area Planner

/eh